UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-NINTH SESSION

Official Records

SECOND COMMITTEE
19th meeting
held on
Wednesday, 2 November 1994
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 19th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KHAN (Pakistan)

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Distr. GENERAL
A/C.2/49/SR.19
21 November 1994

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

94-81971 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 88: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION (continued)

(g) UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (HABITAT II) (A/49/37 and A/49/272)

1. Mr. N'DOW (Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and Assistant Secretary-General in charge of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)), introducing the item, said that the decision to convene a second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) had been prompted by a growing recognition of the challenge represented by urbanization. Currently, the bulk of urban population growth was occurring in developing countries, and that trend was likely to continue.

2. The overall objective of Habitat II was to increase awareness of that challenge and of the need to place human settlements high on the development agenda. The global plan of action envisaged for the Conference would seek to incorporate the recommendations of the major United Nations conferences that marked the closing decade of the century, while at the same time providing a new orientation and setting new targets for a predominantly urban world.

3. More than 50 countries had established or were in the process of establishing national preparatory committees for the Conference. Considerable emphasis had also been placed on the gathering of regional support. In connection with the recent World Habitat Day celebrations in Dakar, Senegal, a number of ministers responsible for housing and human settlements had adopted a Declaration in which they had voiced concern at the growing human settlements crisis in Africa and pledged to support Habitat II. Similar expressions of support had emerged from meetings held earlier in the year by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States.

4. Contributions to the trust fund and voluntary fund established by General Assembly resolution 47/180 were urgently needed to promote the conference and its preparatory activities and also to extend technical and financial assistance to developing countries for their national preparatory processes and their participation in Habitat II. It was his sincere hope that the Committee would take early action to encourage Governments and other donors to provide that support.

5. In view of the extensive programme of work that needed to be carried out, he hoped that the General Assembly would endorse the Preparatory Committee's recommendation that it should be permitted to hold a third preparatory session early in 1966. Support had also been voiced by the International Colloquium of Mayors on Social Development, which had met recently at United Nations Headquarters and by the Second Annual World Bank Conference on Environmentally Sustainable Development, which had stressed the role of Habitat II in developing

a global plan of action for the achievement of sustainable development in all countries. That support was, in many ways, the direct result of alliances and cooperation nurtured by the Centre over the years. In that connection, he paid tribute to Dr. Ramachandran, Habitat's first Executive Director, and to the Executive Director of UNEP, Ms. Dowdeswell, for her work while she was in charge of the Centre.

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued) (A/49/3 and Add.1, A/49/56-S/26926, A/49/122-E/1994/44 and Add.1, A/49/169-E/1994/73, A/49/179-E/1994/82, A/49/189, A/49/215-E/1994/99, A/49/423, A/49/437, A/49/495, A/49/506; A/49/L.5 and Add.1; A/C.2/49/3, A/C.2/49/4, A/C.2/49/6, A/C.2/49/7; A/C.2/49/L.2 and A/C.2/49/L.3)

6. Mr. DOUJAK (Austria) welcomed the steps taken to rationalize the work of the Economic and Social Council in response to General Assembly resolution 48/162, and urged the Council to apply all of the principles established in that resolution. The extent of the role that the United Nations would have in the economic and social fields would depend greatly on the ability of the Council to react appropriately to emerging problems and to propose solutions, particularly in the area of development. Recent international conferences and those that were scheduled for the near future would assist in developing such responses. The dimensions of development were interrelated, and a global view of the problems would be needed in order to avoid a fragmented response.

7. Turning to another issue, he said that documentation would become ever more crucial as the issues which the United Nations addressed increased in complexity. Solutions must be sought regarding its volume, quantity and structure. The Committee would soon have before it a draft resolution on the subject, prepared by the Council (E/1994/L.41). His delegation would welcome further discussion of the text with interested delegations.

8. Mr. CAMARA (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) said that consultations between the specialized agencies and the Economic and Social Council augured well for more productive cooperation. In his view, a fresh approach was needed to the high-level segment. Delegations should distribute the texts of their statements at least a day in advance and should keep their oral presentations short, focusing on the main points, in order to allow time for a true dialogue. During the operational activities segment there had been a marked improvement in the participation by representatives of the specialized agencies in the informal consultations. That tendency should be encouraged, because the implementation of the relevant resolutions concerned the system as a whole.

9. With regard to the implementation of resolution 48/162 as it referred to the Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes of the World Food Programme, the FAO secretariat prepared a note for submission to the next session of the FAO Council.

10. Mr. ACHARYA (Nepal) said that the report of the Economic and Social Council (A/49/3) provided a basic framework for fulfilling the mandate assigned to the

Council by General Assembly resolutions 45/264 and 48/162. He commended the Council for covering, within a limited time-frame, an impressive agenda encompassing a wide range of issues.

11. Progress had indeed been achieved in the reform of the Council's working mechanisms and its relationship to the General Assembly; however, much remained to be done in that regard. Even the Secretariat felt that the discussions during the operational activities segment had focused more on process than on policies. That situation must be remedied.

12. The lack of clarity and vigour in the restructuring and revitalization process stemmed from failure to adhere to the basic principles and guidelines, set forth in General Assembly resolution 45/264. His delegation strongly agreed with the Nordic countries that the issue of financing must be addressed as a process that would test the political will of Member States with regard to operational activities for development. It also agreed with the Secretary-General that the financing situation could not be improved through new mechanisms alone. The assessment of the Council's work should include a review of two elements which were crucial to its restructuring and revitalization: transparency and openness, and the complementarity between the Council and the General Assembly.

13. Turning to the issue of documentation, he said that a change of format was needed. Main documents requiring action should be clear and concise; supporting documents should provide guidance on decision-making and enumerate alternatives; and all documentation should be available on time. The streamlining of the Council's agenda represented an important first step. The exchange of views between Council members and representatives of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) had infused a new dynamism into the Council's work.

14. Mr. BASMAJIEV (Bulgaria) noted that the new format of the 1994 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council had resulted in more focused discussions. In his delegation's view, the deliberations on major policy issues, in particular on an agenda for development, during the high-level segment had done much to enhance the Council's role. His delegation agreed, however, that deliberations during the high-level segment should not consist primarily of prepared statements. The participation of the executive heads of the multilateral financial and trade institutions had helped to increase cooperation between the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions. His delegation, too, believed that such policy dialogues should focus more on major themes and be more result-oriented.

15. The coordination segment had been extremely useful, particularly the deliberations on international cooperation within the United Nations system against the illicit production, sale, demand, traffic and distribution of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. The discussions of the agreed conclusions of the 1993 coordination segment had also been valuable. His

delegation agreed that the coordination segment would be more effective if it took action rather than deferring items to the next session.

16. His delegation shared the view that the operational activities segment should provide coordination and guidance with a view to improving the overall quality and effectiveness of the system and promoting an integrated approach. That would facilitate the implementation of the policies formulated by the General Assembly during the triennial policy review. It also welcomed the enhanced role and status of resident coordinators and the transformation of the governing bodies of the different funds and programmes into executive boards.

17. Despite the successful rationalization of the Council's work under the new format, his delegation believed that, in future, the organization of work within the general segment should be more precisely defined. His delegation supported efforts to strengthen the role and capacity of the Commission on Sustainable Development and welcomed the integration of the Commission on Transnational Corporations into the institutional machinery of UNCTAD. It also regarded the establishment of a United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights as a major achievement.

18. The reduction in the number of resolutions and decisions adopted during the 1994 substantive session was due in large measure to the fact that draft texts had been referred to the General Assembly. There was thus much room for improvement in that connection. His delegation supported the further streamlining of the mechanism for the presentation of documentation.

19. Mr. BASHIR (Sudan) stressed the importance of coordination of United Nations humanitarian assistance for countries hit by natural disasters and congratulated the system as a whole on the fine work it had accomplished in that area. However, because of a failure to link emergency relief to long-term rehabilitation and development and to build up national disaster prevention capabilities, people had come to depend on disaster relief. Disaster-prone countries should be helped to establish development projects and to consolidate their infrastructure, so as to become more self-reliant.

20. Malaria was a problem of the greatest urgency and one of the most serious obstacles to development, especially in Africa. As the disease had developed a resistance to the traditional treatment with chloroquine, people had begun to take quinine, even though it had undesirable side-effects on the kidneys. The Sudan had launched a national campaign to clean streets and ponds and to spray swamps in order to eradicate malaria-carrying mosquitoes. His delegation intended to submit a draft resolution calling on the international community to provide the assistance for that purpose.

21. Mr. PIBULSONGGRAM (Thailand) said that his delegation shared the views expressed by the Chairman of the Group of 77. In particular, it agreed that there was a need for a more in-depth final assessment of the reform and revitalization of the Organization. Special attention should also be given to

reducing duplication of efforts and to encouraging the specialized agencies to be more budget conscious.

22. Turning to the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States (A/49/179-E/1994/82), he said that his delegation agreed with a number of points made therein. First, the implementation of a number of instruments adopted at United Nations conferences in the past two years - including Agenda 21, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the Cartagena Commitment and the successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations - would indeed contribute to the achievement of the objectives of that Charter. Second, his delegation agreed that another way to move closer towards those goals would be to promote an open and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system. Third, it was concerned at the decline in contributions of donors to the Development Assistance Committee as a share of gross national product. Resources were sorely needed in order to help countries implement structural adjustment programmes and to foster market-oriented economies, particularly in the African countries.

23. His delegation agreed with the view expressed by the President of the Economic and Social Council that the adoption of an agenda for development called for political will. Priority should be accorded to improving standards of living of a considerable number of the world's people, expanding trade and building both North-South and South-South cooperation.

24. Concerning operational activities for development, particular emphasis should be placed on relations among the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and Governments at the grass-roots and national levels. His delegation fully supported the efforts of the United Nations to strengthen cooperation among the three actors, as described in the note by the Secretary-General on that subject (A/49/122-E/1994/44). In the context of an agenda for development, the comparative advantages of the three partners must be exploited. In Thailand, NGO participation had been instrumental in reducing population growth. NGOs had also provided substantive support to Thailand's national preparatory process for the International Conference on Population and Development.

25. Turning to the issue of resource mobilization for the implementation of the regional action programme for phase II (1992-1996) of the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific (A/49/437) he said that his delegation agreed that special attention should be given to the needs of the least developed, landlocked and island developing countries of the region, in accordance with the objectives set forth in General Assembly resolution 39/227. Thailand had engaged in bilateral and trilateral cooperation with several countries in the areas of civil aviation and land transportation. Studies were under way with a view to extending such cooperation to other countries, particularly in the area of training. In conclusion, his delegation appealed to donor and other countries to provide greater support for the much larger-scale regional action programme.

26. Mr. HORIGUCHI (Japan) said that while reform efforts were beginning to bear fruit, there was still room for further improvement. It was unfortunate that the Council had not been more successful in achieving a high political profile. One way to attract a higher level of participation in the high-level segment would be to select a timely and attractive theme. The decision regarding themes for the coordination and high-level segments should be made earlier in the organizational session, in order to allow more time for the Secretariat to prepare reports.

27. In order to reduce the volume of documentation, it was necessary to establish an order of priority among the various reports called for by the resolutions and to reduce their overall number. The proposal contained in E/1994/L.41 would be one practical way of achieving that end. As a next step, a list should be made of all the reports the Secretariat was required to prepare for both the Second Committee and the Council. It might not be necessary to issue documents six weeks in advance of a discussion; however, three weeks was the minimum time needed to enable delegations to participate intelligently. His delegation, therefore, proposed that all necessary measures should be taken to reduce reporting requirements and ensure that all required documents were distributed well enough in advance to allow delegations to be properly prepared for substantive discussion.

28. Mr. WISNUMURTI (Indonesia) said that the Economic and Social Council could be of pivotal importance in efforts to return economic growth and development and combating poverty to the top of the international agenda. The new procedures for reforming the substantive session had already yielded positive results. However, he wondered whether further changes should not be pursued. His delegation agreed that it was time to move on to the promising area of policy and substantive issues.

29. The concentration on a single topic at the high-level segment had enabled the Council to give increased attention to critical issues, but there was a need to explore ways to increase the participation of ministers and executive heads of agencies and to make such participation more effective. Discussions should focus more on the achievement of action-oriented policies. It might be more productive to continue the shift from the traditional prepared speech towards more spontaneous dialogue, but for such a dialogue to be productive, the relevant documents must be made available well in advance of the meeting.

30. As to operational activities, his delegation fully shared the concern about diminishing resources. Even if the international community was successful in achieving consensus on action-oriented policy and new procedures in the economic and social fields, little could be achieved without adequate financial and other resources. The interests of the international community could best be served, therefore, if a new funding mechanism for operational activities was created. Increased funding was more likely to be forthcoming if development programmes and projects were clearly identified.

31. Mr. MOJOUKHOV (Belarus) said that his delegation regretted the delay in moving forward from internal restructuring of the United Nations to tangible

reform of its activities in the economic, social and related sectors. As a country whose economy was in transition, Belarus advocated a geographically more balanced approach not only to the reform of intergovernmental bodies and their methods of work but also to the corresponding programming and budgetary activities so as to incorporate integrated social, environmental and economic priorities in the interests of all countries and regions.

32. Development activities should, as a general rule, be channelled through existing intergovernmental machinery in order to avoid fragmentation and duplication. An integrated approach should be adopted, strengthening the role of the General Assembly and its subsidiary organs and applying the principles of a balance of interests and the complementarity of coordinated efforts undertaken on the global, regional and national levels, principles that should also be taken into account in considering proposals for international conferences. Due attention should also be given to regional development processes with a global dimension.

33. While his delegation supported, in principle, the emerging division of labour between the General Assembly committees, the Economic and Social Council and the United Nations funds and programmes, the latter created some difficulties for Member States that were not represented in the scaled-down decision-making bodies of the organs concerned and who were therefore unable to air their views on particular subjects. Consideration should be given in that context to the possibility of holding pre-sessional consultations in which those States could participate. In the interests of transparency, his delegation also supported those speakers who had opposed unduly strict regulation of the discussion.

34. His delegation was in favour of increased ministerial participation in the high-level segment of the Council in 1995, and of a one-day dialogue on the role of the World Trade Organization, involving the Bretton Woods institutions and the non-governmental sector. The operational activities segment should focus on practical aspects of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and discuss the results of the negotiations on new arrangements for the funding of operational activities for development. With regard to the coordination segment, his delegation supported the proposal to consider not more than two new questions of system-wide coordination and to analyse progress in the implementation of previous decisions. A more focused approach should be adopted in preparing the agenda for the substantive session of the Council in 1995, applying, for example, the principle of clustering. The Austrian proposals for improving documentation would provide a sound basis for a Committee resolution on the subject.

35. In future the Committee should not take up the item concerning the report of the Economic and Social Council until the Council had held its resumed substantive session. Finally, he stressed the need to improve the relationship under the Charter between the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council and its committees, especially those dealing with sanctions.

36. Mr. BIVERO (Venezuela) said that the revitalized Economic and Social Council was being called on to assume the role originally intended for it in the Charter. The experience gained during the most recent session of the Council should encourage further improvements in the working methods. He drew attention to the need for a more substantive dialogue between its various segments, and for action-oriented recommendations. Consideration should also be given to ensuring the follow-up to the results of the Council's deliberations and the agreed conclusions of the high-level segment so that a detailed evaluation of their implementation could be conducted. In that context, the discussions at the 1995 high-level segment on drugs was of particular importance to a coordinated system-wide effort.

37. Resolution 48/162 provided a framework for greater efficiency and effectiveness in working methods and decision-making mechanisms for the executive boards of the funds and programmes. It was of continuing concern, however, that financing of operational activities remained a marginal issue, particularly in the light of diminishing resources.

38. Another matter for consideration was the work of the subsidiary bodies of the Council, especially those composed of experts appointed to serve in their personal capacities. He expressed reservations concerning some of the recommendations in the draft resolutions based on the work of the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development and the Committee on Natural Resources. Their function was to provide scientific and technical advice, and they should stick to their mandate. It would be a good idea to re-examine the guidelines established for those committees.

AGENDA ITEM 87: MACROECONOMIC POLICY QUESTIONS (continued) (A/C.2/49/L.6)

(a) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMITMENTS AND POLICIES AGREED UPON IN THE DECLARATION ON INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION, IN PARTICULAR THE REVITALIZATION OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (continued)

(b) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR THE FOURTH UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT DECADE (continued)

39. Mr. AHMIA (Algeria) introduced draft resolution A/C.2/49/L.6 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. In the interest of rationalization, the sponsors were submitting one draft resolution to cover the two sub-items.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.